

On this, the sixth anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks, our nation pauses once again to remember the innocent men, women and children who senselessly perished that dark day.

Many may find it appropriate to reflect on the tragic loss suffered by our fellow citizens and consider how things have changed since the disaster. Commemorating this sad anniversary offers us an important opportunity to promote healing and to acknowledge the resilience of a nation that suffered an immeasurable shock.

We remember that out of the debris and wreckage came incredible acts of human compassion and generosity. Hundreds of thousands of people, regardless of whether they knew someone who was lost in the attacks, mobilized to come to the assistance of their fellow citizens and communities in need.

We also could not quickly forget the call for help we heard in Maryland and the enormous response from our friends and neighbors in the immediate aftermath of September 11th. This demonstration of service to others continues today, evidenced in every corner of our nation, where an invigorated sense of community and generosity has proved to be a force that no act of terror could extinguish.

Furthermore, with the images of September 11th still fresh in our memory, our nation collectively declared, 'Never again.' And, in the ensuing period, thousands of Americans have worked tirelessly to improve our nation's security and to protect our people. They deserve our praise and our thanks. However,

despite some progress, it would be a disservice to the memory of those who were killed on September 11th to pretend that we were as safe as we could be.

It was for this reason that the bipartisan 9/11 Commission was convened in 2004. The purpose of this historic Commission was to seek to understand what occurred on that fateful day and how we might prevent future attacks. The product of the Commission's comprehensive analysis was made manifest in the 9/11 Report, which included a series of recommendations for action to address the nation's major security vulnerabilities.

Inconceivably, for three years, the Commission's recommendations languished. The Commission itself even gave the previous Congress five F's, 12 D's, nine C's and two incompletes for failing to implement these measures.

Thus, as one of the first orders of business, the new Majority passed, and the President signed into law,

legislation implementing in full the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. In passing this significant national priority, we took an enormous step forward in hardening our nation's defenses and combating - and eliminating - the terrorists who seek to harm us.

Let no one be mistaken: this legislation alone cannot immunize our nation from attack. Clearly our nation is faced with additional challenges as we continue to react and respond to the effects of September 11th, here at home in addition to our efforts to combat terrorism worldwide. However, it represents an important step forward for our national security. As former Congressman Lee Hamilton, the co-chair of the 9/11 Commission, has noted: 'The bottom line is that when it [this legislation] is enacted and implemented, the American people will be safer.'

Making America safer must always be our clear and present objective. And, it surely is our responsibility as we have no higher duty than to protect the American people, to defend our homeland, and to strengthen our national security.

As the citizens of this great country unite in healing on this anniversary, we recognize September 11th as a solemn reminder of humanity's inevitable vulnerability, but we are also reminded that we are part of something much larger than ourselves. We are the land of the free and the home of the brave, and the terrorists who sought to break our spirit six years ago only clarified our purpose, steeled our resolve and confirmed our sense of self. On this sixth anniversary of the September 11th attacks we can take solace in the fact that while the American spirit may have been temporarily bruised, it has since emerged even stronger than ever.